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(54) **SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING SCANNING MEDIUM**

(71) Applicant: **Delphinus Medical Technologies, Inc.**,
Plymouth, MI (US)

(72) Inventors: **Mike Tesic**, Plymouth, MI (US); **Marc Orloff**, Plymouth, MI (US); **Kevin Obrigkeit**, Plymouth, MI (US); **David Kunz**, Plymouth, MI (US); **Roman Janer**, Plymouth, MI (US)

(73) Assignee: **DELPHINUS MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES, INC.**, Novi, MI (US)

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A61B 8/08 (2006.01)
A61B 8/13 (2006.01)
A61B 5/00 (2006.01)

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC A61B 5/0091; A61B 5/01; A61B 8/0825; A61B 8/13; A61B 8/406; A61B 8/4281; A61B 8/4461; A61B 8/4494

See application file for complete search history.

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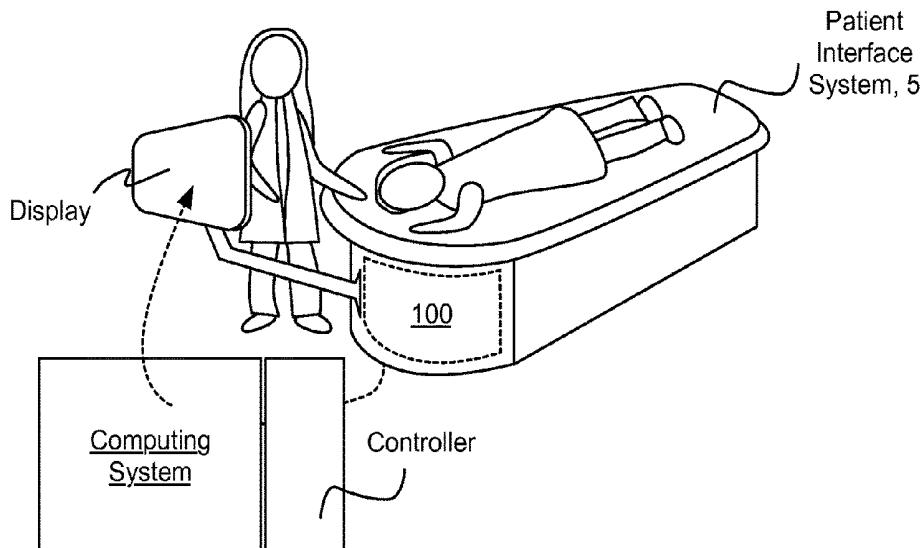
Primary Examiner — Michael Rozanski

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system for providing scanning medium for scanning a volume of tissue comprising: an inner chamber that contains the scanning medium; a transducer mounted to the inner chamber and configured to move along a motion path, with the inner chamber, in scanning the volume of tissue; an outer chamber concentrically aligned about the inner chamber to guide the inner chamber along the motion path; a piston module defining a base surface within the inner chamber, the piston module comprising a medium inlet and a medium outlet for adjusting an amount of the scanning medium within the inner chamber; a detection subsystem coupled to the base surface of the piston module; and an actuator comprising a stationary portion mounted to the piston module and a moving portion coupled to the inner chamber and configured to produce motion of the inner chamber along the motion path.

12 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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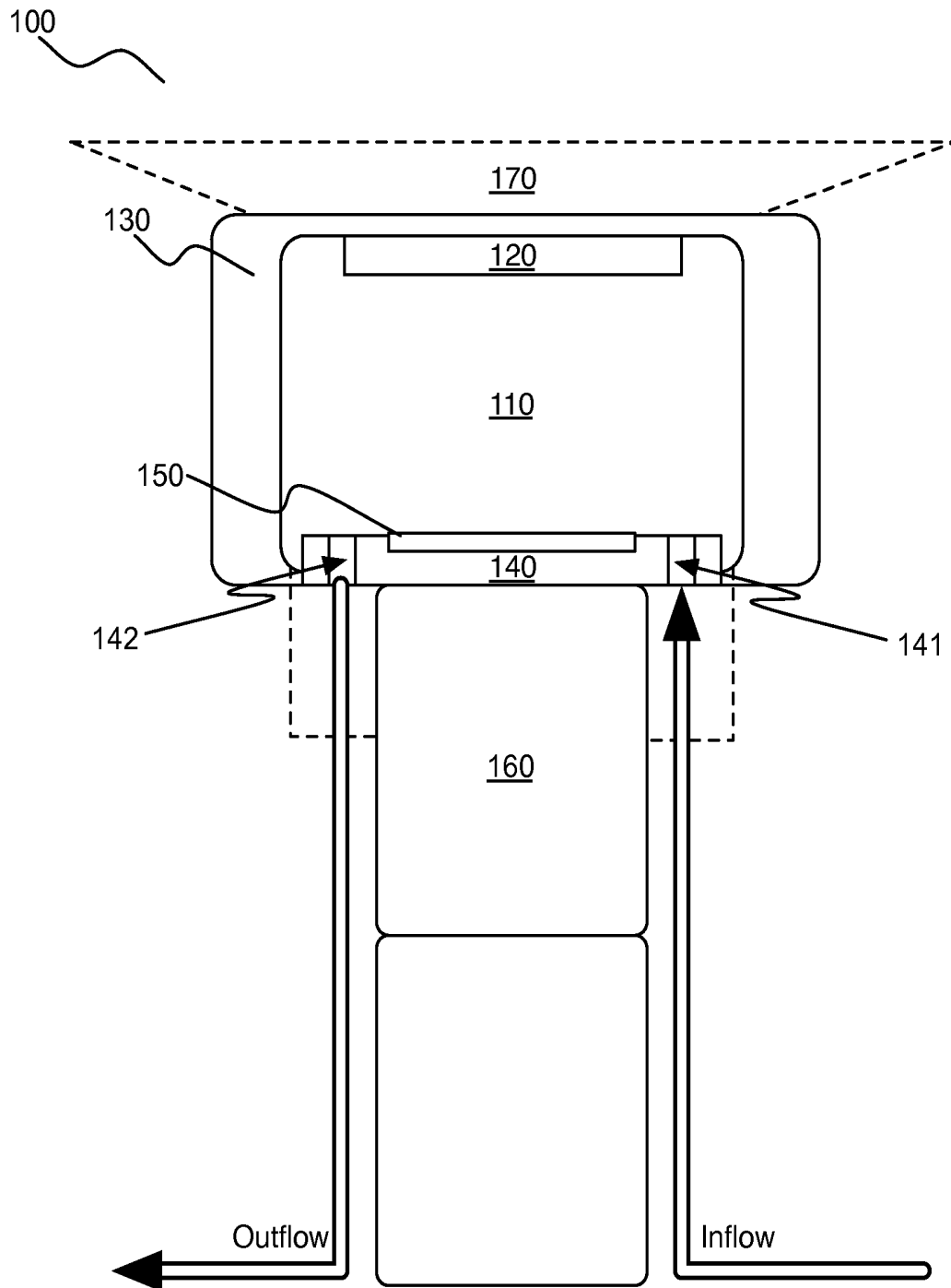


FIGURE 1A

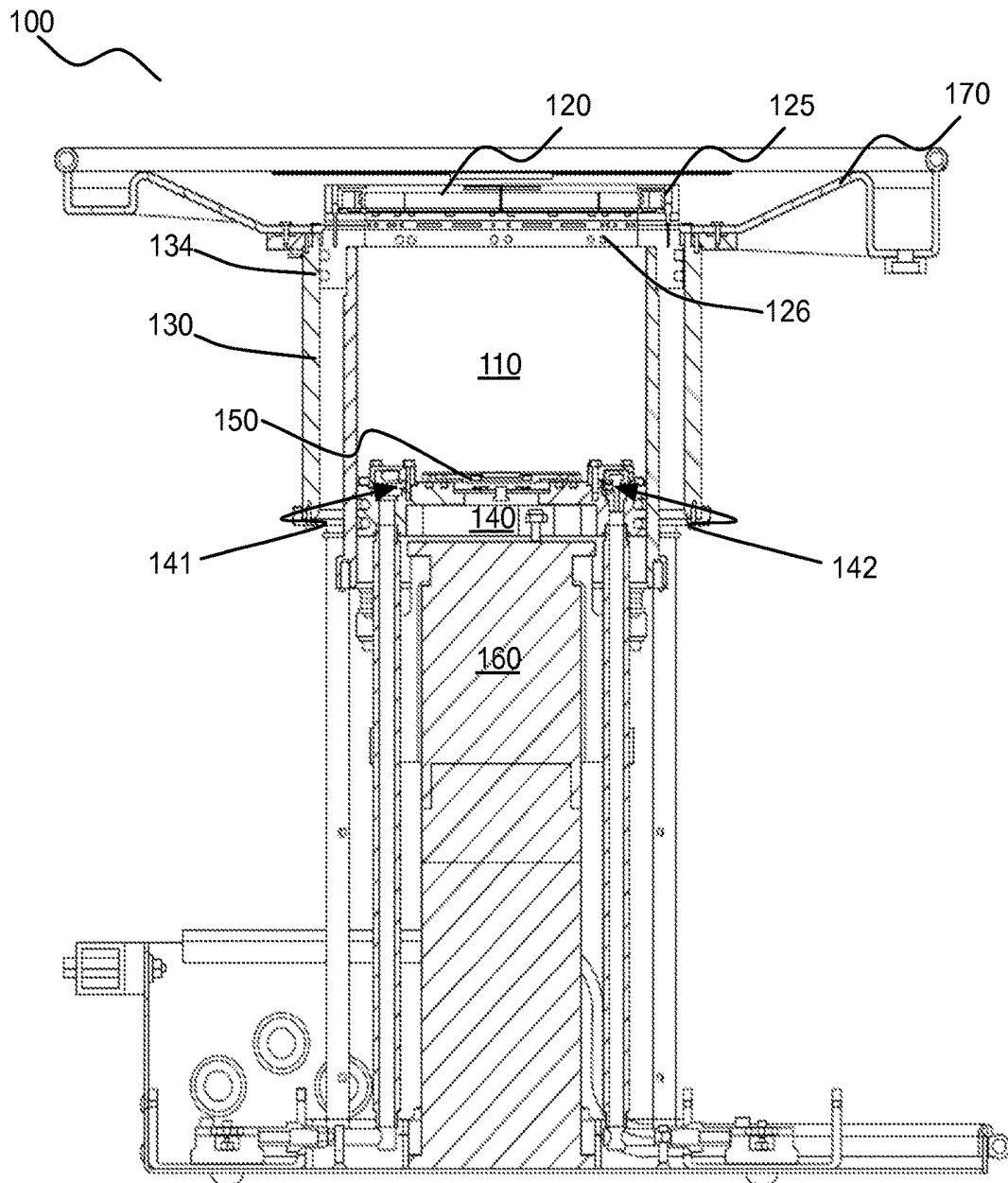
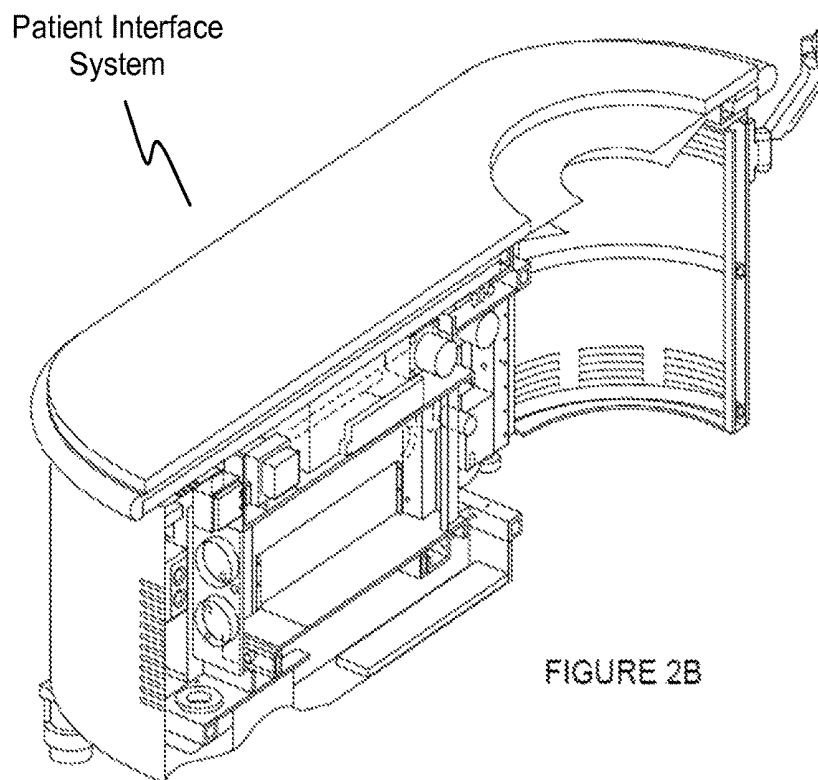
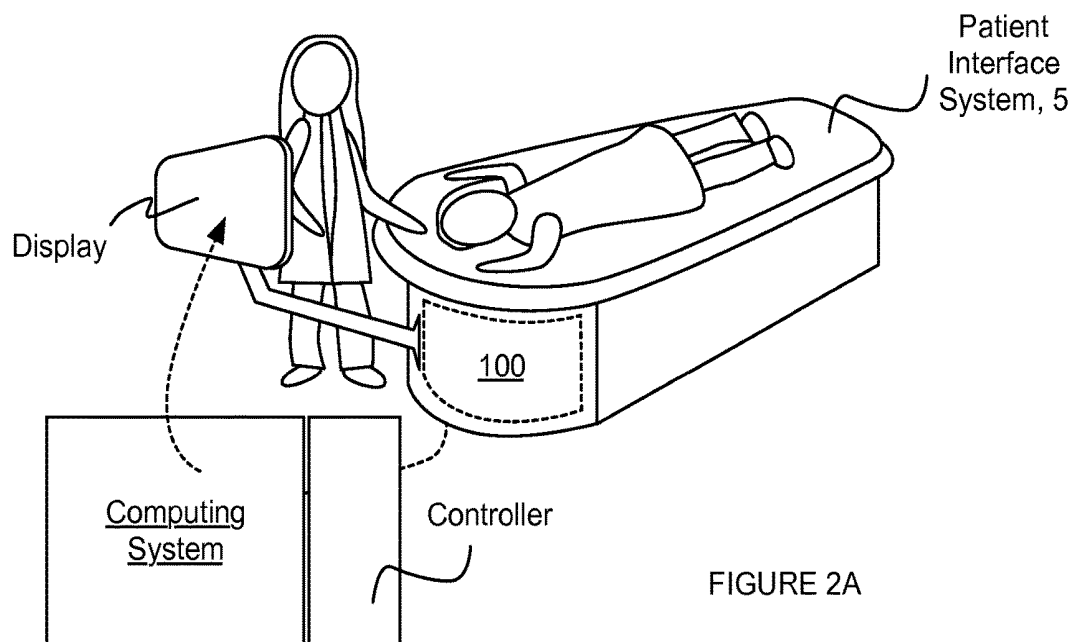


FIGURE 1B



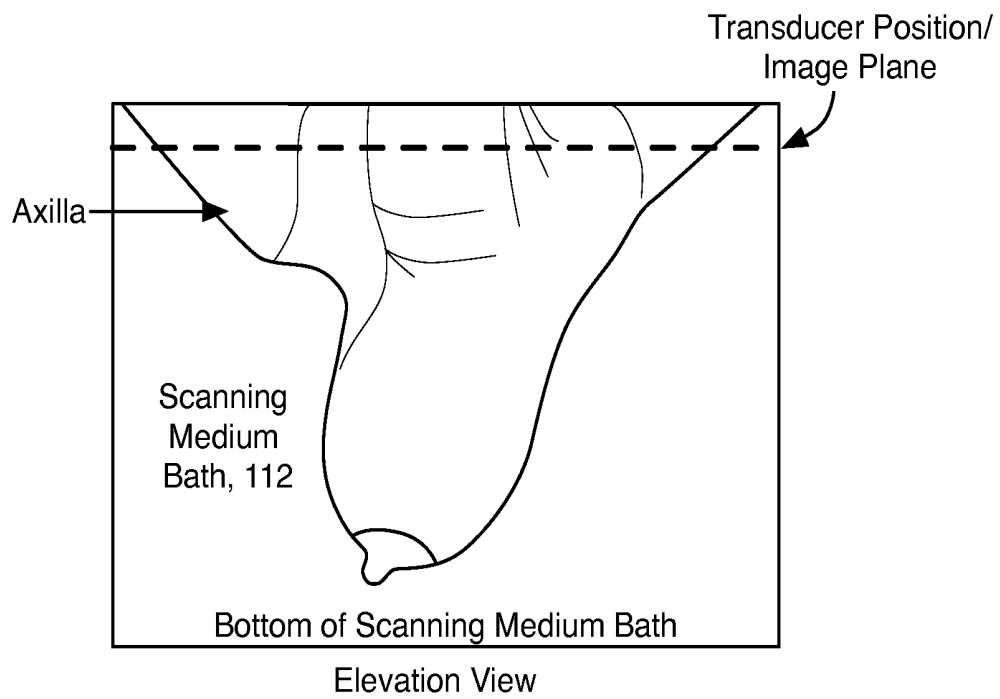


FIGURE 2C

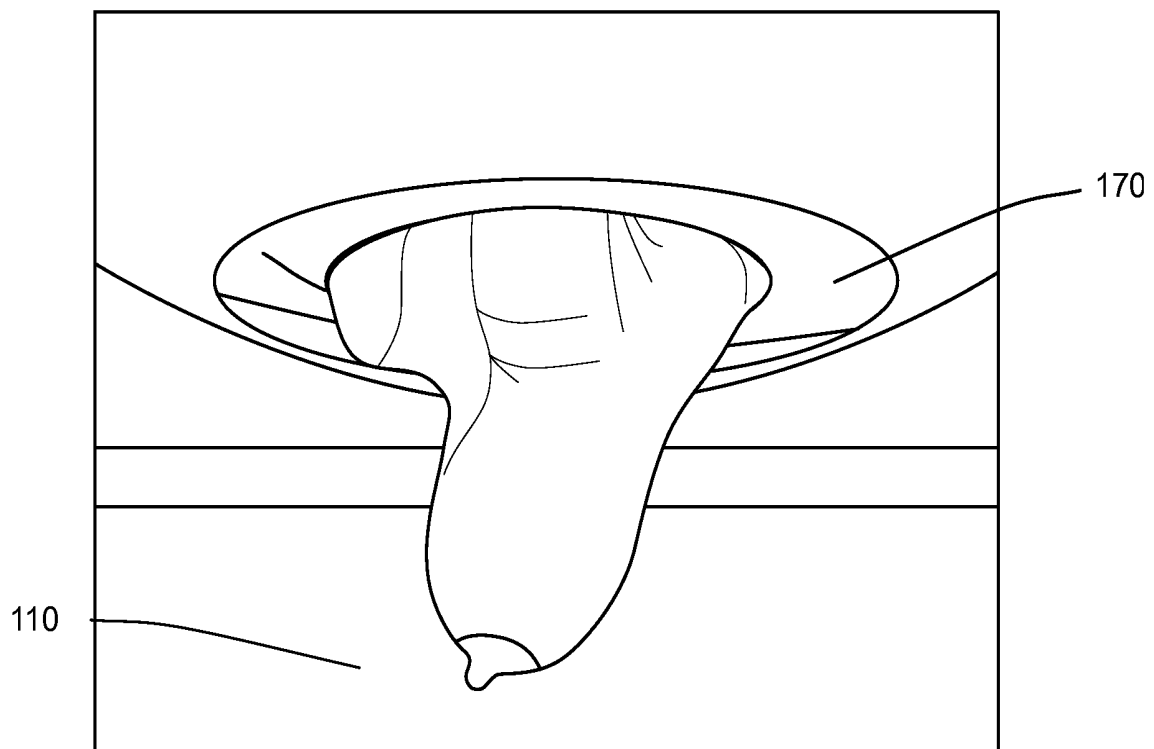


FIGURE 2D

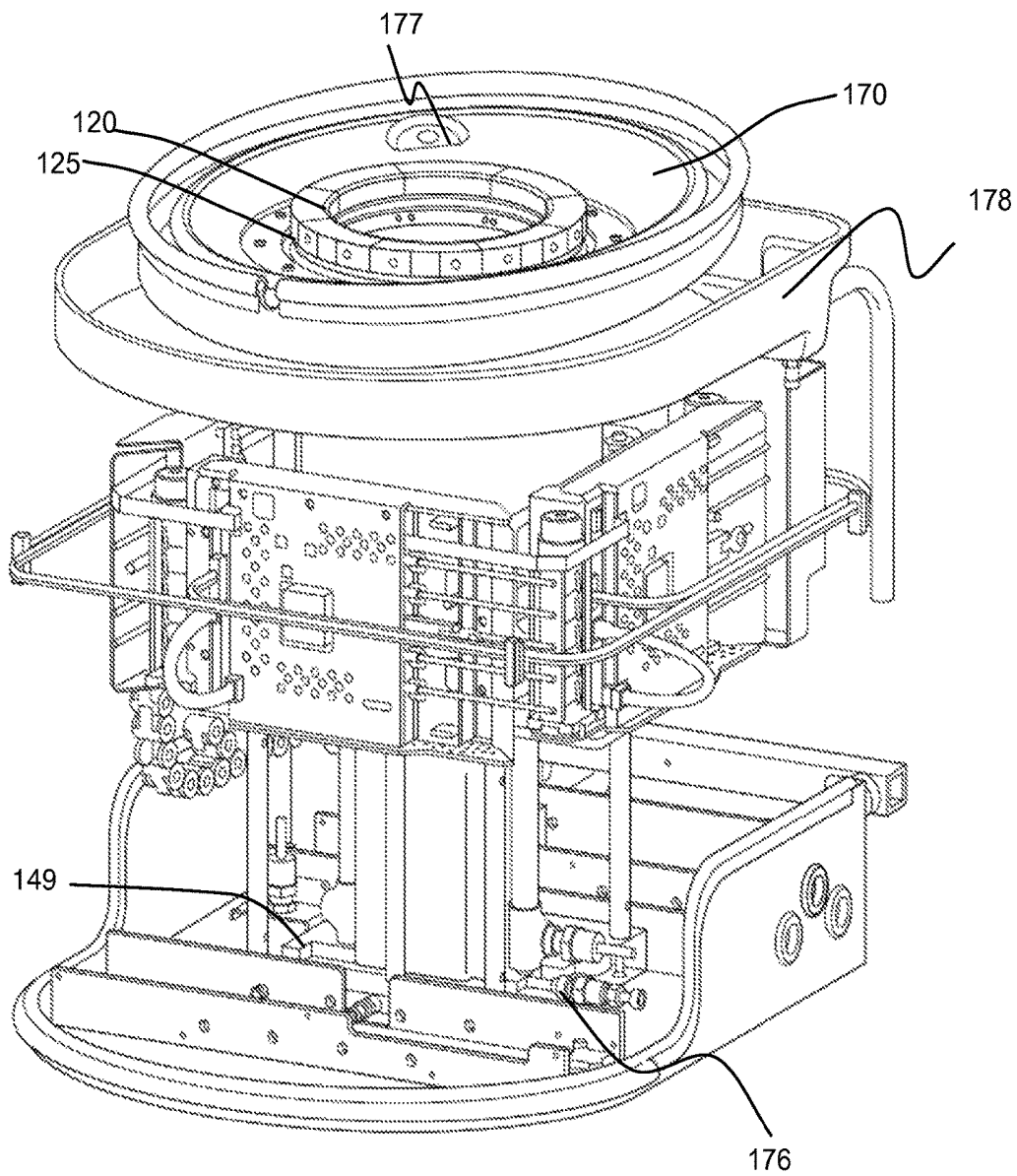


FIGURE 3A

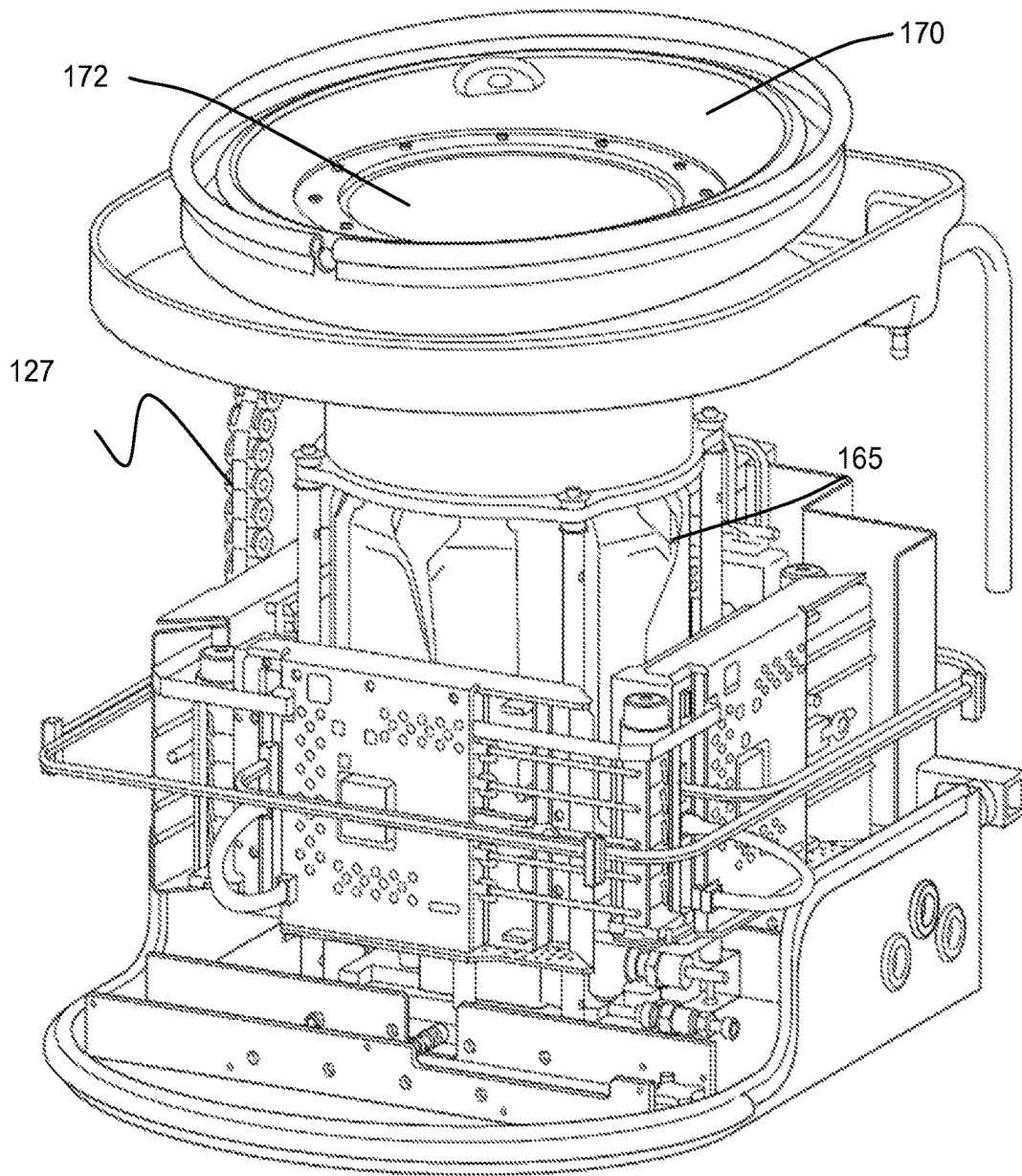
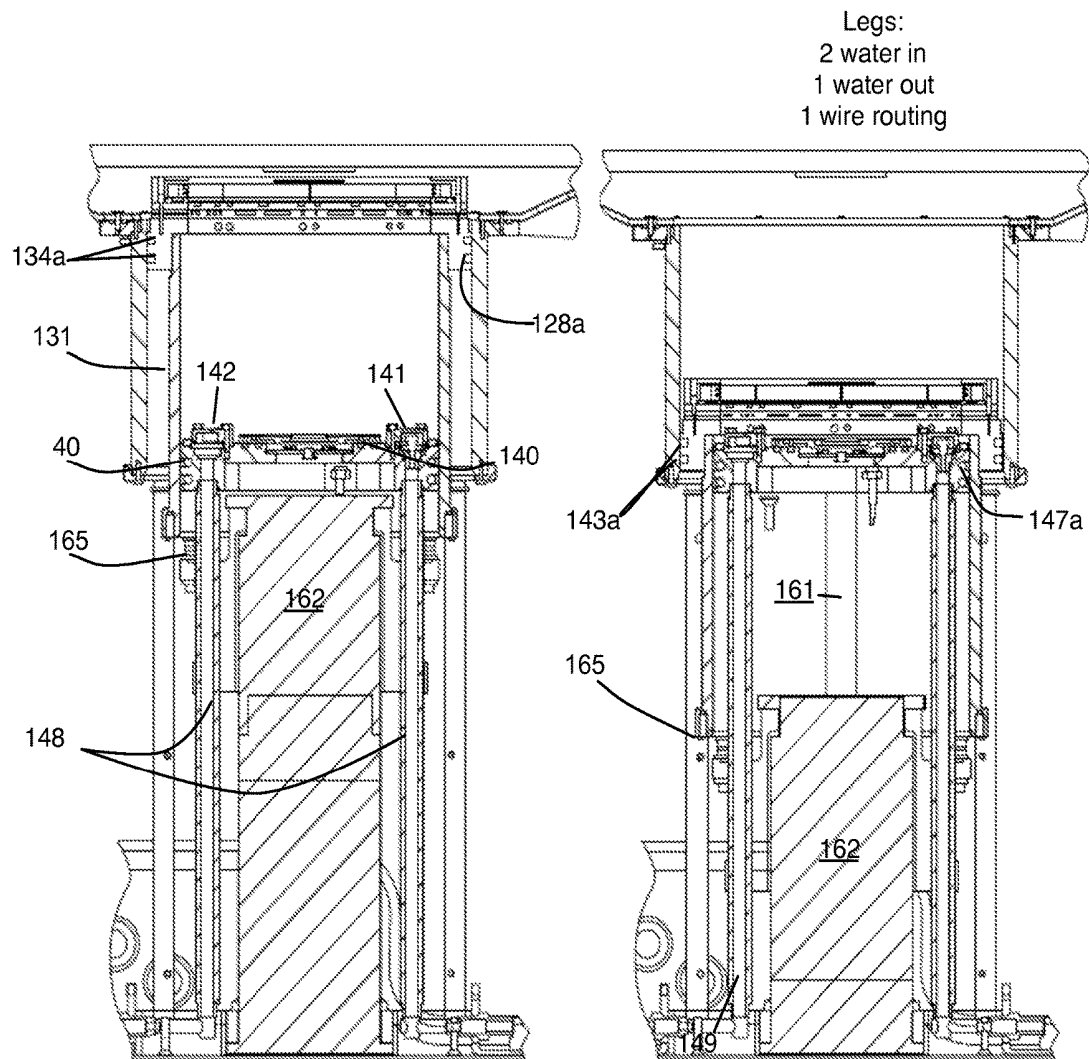


FIGURE 3B



MOVING INNER CHAMBER-MOVING SEAL

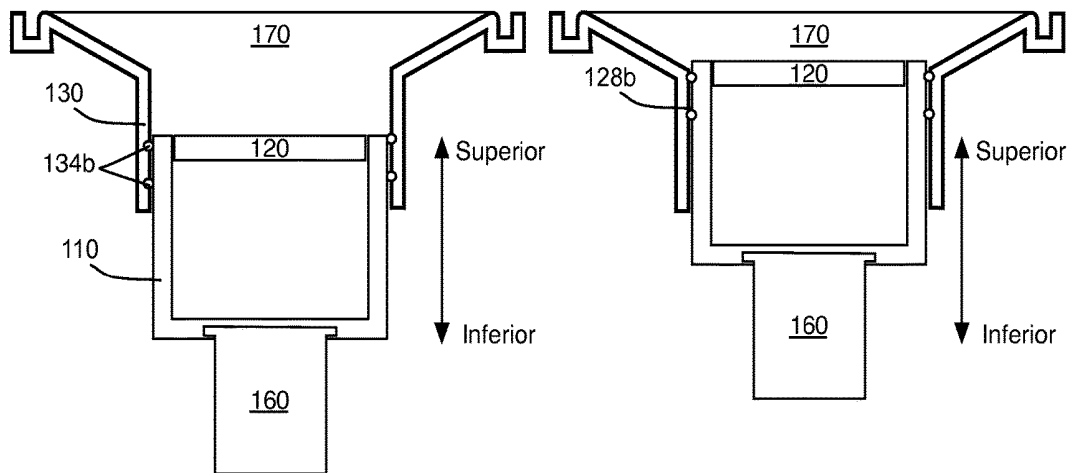


FIGURE 4B

MOVING INNER CHAMBER-STATIONARY SEAL

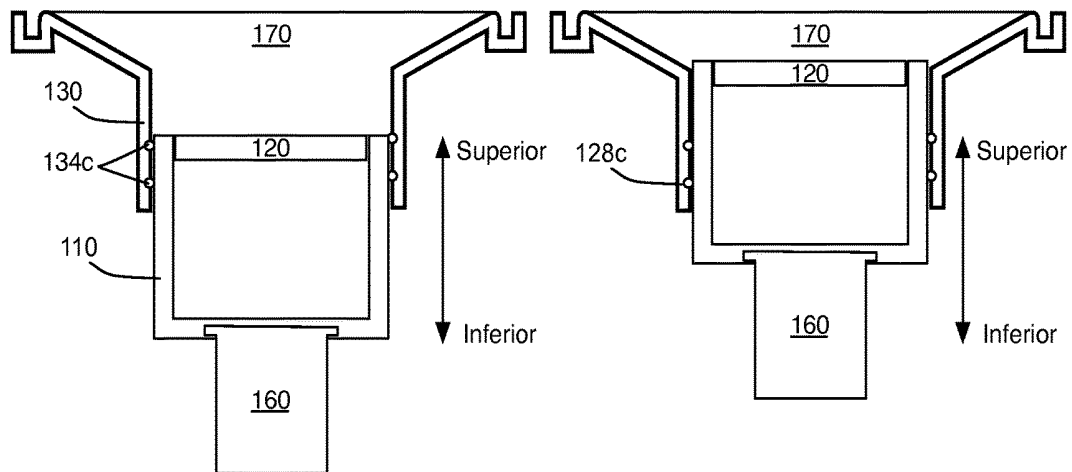


FIGURE 4C

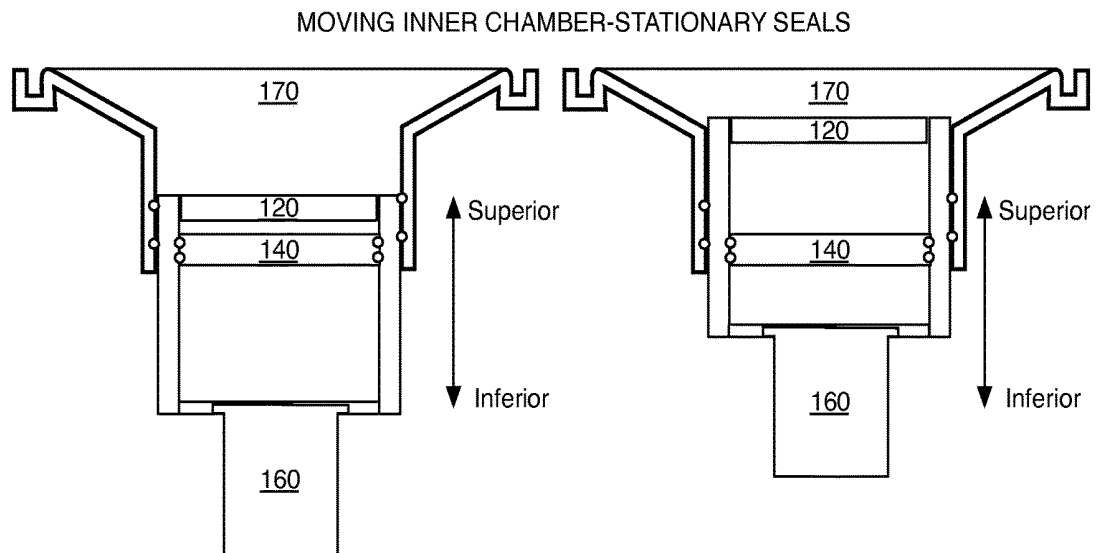


FIGURE 4D

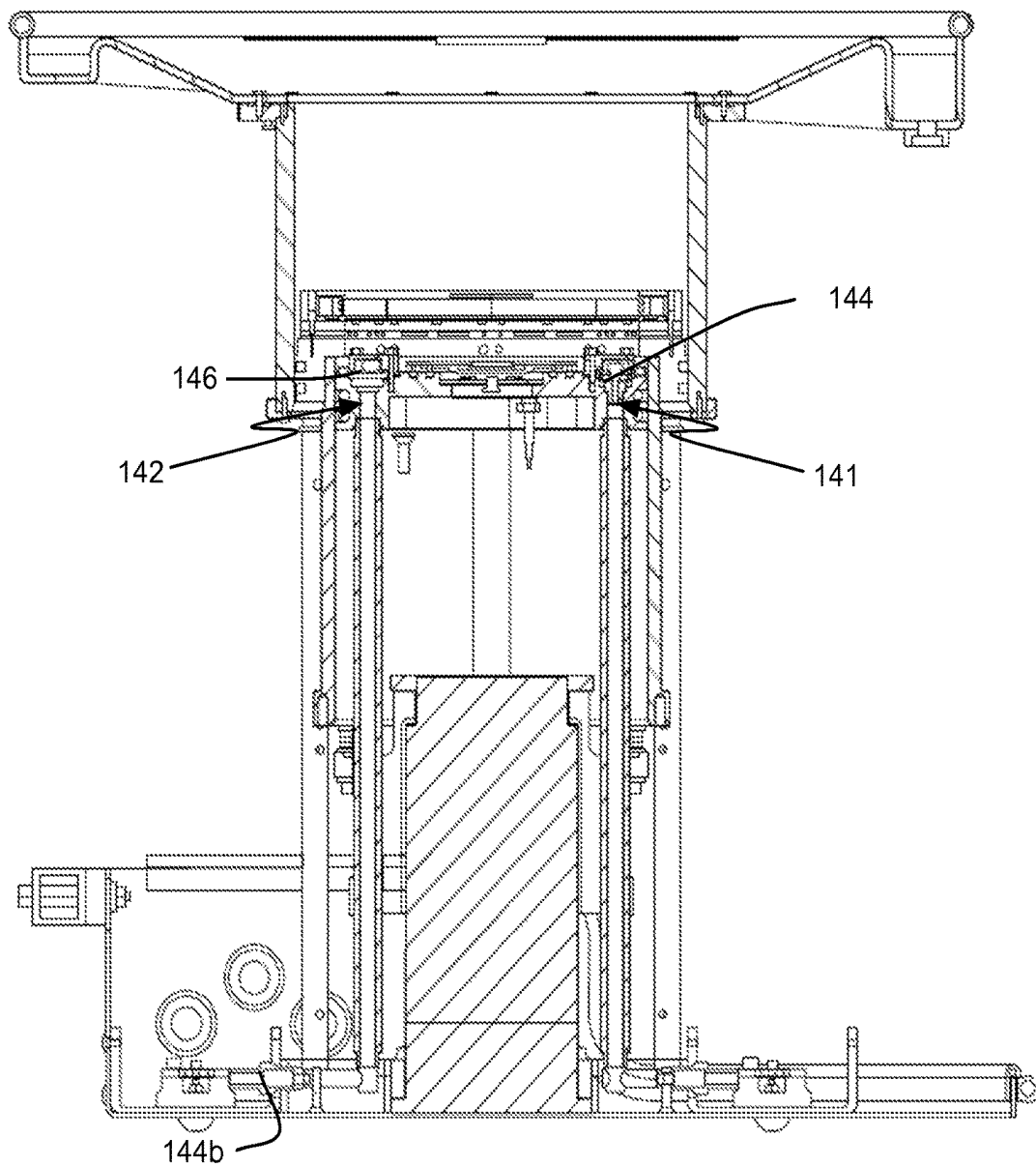


FIGURE 5

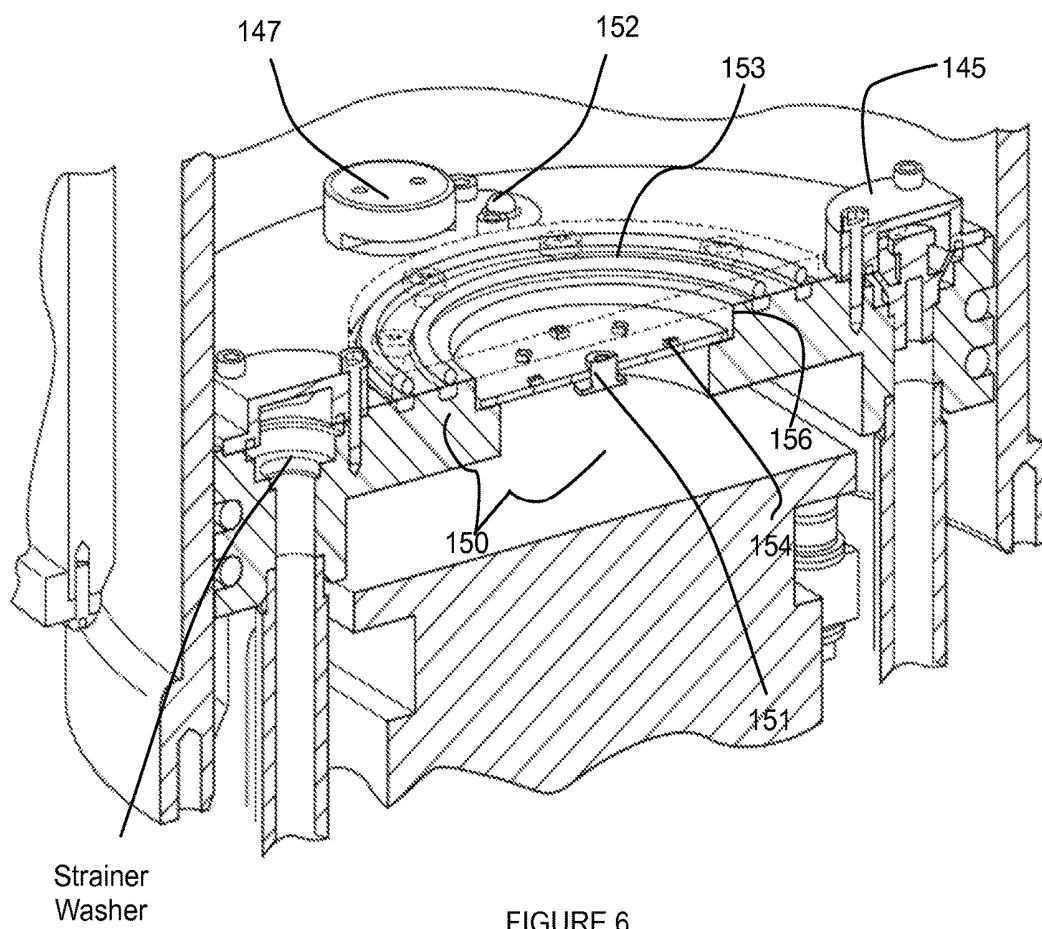


FIGURE 6

SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING SCANNING MEDIUM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 62/029,696 filed 28 Jul. 2014, which is incorporated in its entirety herein by this reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates generally to the medical technology field, and more specifically to a new and useful system for controlling scanning medium in the medical technology field.

BACKGROUND

Early detection of breast cancer and other types of cancer typically result in a higher survival rate. Despite a widely accepted standard of mammography screenings for breast cancer detection, there are many reasons that cancer is often not detected early. One reason is low participation in breast screening, as a result of factors such as fear of radiation and discomfort. In particular, the mammography procedure involves compression of the breast tissue between parallel plates to increase the X-ray image quality by providing a more uniform tissue thickness and stabilizing the tissue. However, this compression is typically uncomfortable, or even painful. Mammography has additional drawbacks, such as limited performance among women with dense breast tissue and a high rate of “false alarms” that lead to unnecessary biopsies that are collectively expensive and result in emotional duress in patients.

Ultrasound tomography is one imaging modality in development that may be a practical alternative to mammography. However, there is a need in ultrasound tomography applications to provide a system that controls provision of a scanning medium in a robust manner. This invention provides such a new and useful system for providing scanning medium.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIGS. 1A and 1B depict schematics of embodiments of a system for providing scanning medium;

FIGS. 2A and 2B depict schematics of embodiments of a patient interface system that interfaces with a system for providing scanning medium;

FIGS. 2C and 2D depict elevation views of a volume of tissue of a patient within a portion of an embodiment of the system for providing scanning medium;

FIGS. 3A and 3B depict specific examples of a portion of an embodiment of a system for providing scanning medium;

FIG. 4A depicts a specific example of two configurations of a system for providing scanning medium;

FIGS. 4B-4D depict variations of a portion of a system for providing scanning medium;

FIG. 5 depicts specific examples of elements of an embodiment of a system for providing scanning medium; and

FIG. 6 depicts specific examples of a piston module and detection subsystem of an embodiment of a system for providing scanning medium.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The following description of preferred embodiments of the invention is not intended to limit the invention to these preferred embodiments, but rather to enable any person skilled in the art to make and use this invention.

1. System

As shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B, an embodiment of a system **100** for providing a scanning medium in facilitating scanning of a volume of tissue of a patient includes: an inner chamber **110** defining a medium volume for containment of the scanning medium **112**; a transducer **120** mounted to the inner chamber **110** and configured to move along a motion path, with the inner chamber, in scanning the volume of tissue; an outer chamber **130** concentrically aligned about the inner chamber **110** to guide the inner chamber along the motion path; a piston module **140** defining a base surface **142** within the inner chamber **110**, the piston module **140** comprising a medium inlet **141** and a medium outlet **142** for adjusting an amount of the scanning medium within the inner chamber; a detection subsystem **150** coupled to the base surface of the piston module **140**; and an actuator **160** comprising a stationary portion mounted to the piston module, and a moving portion coupled to the inner chamber and configured to produce motion of the inner chamber along the motion path. The system **100** can further comprise a patient support surface **170** coupled to the outer chamber **130** and having an opening that facilitates reception of the volume of tissue into the inner chamber **110**.

The system **100** functions to control a tissue scanning device (e.g., an ultrasound transducer), in communication with a volume of a scanning medium, in order to facilitate scanning of a volume of tissue submerged in the scanning medium. In particular, the system **100** is configured to enable motion of a chamber containing a scanning medium relative to a volume of tissue of a patient, while preventing leakage of the scanning medium and other system malfunctions. The system **100** can also function to facilitate a reduction in the amount of unnecessary scans taken (e.g., due to patient misalignment). In one embodiment, as shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B, the system **100** can be provided along with a patient interface system **5** configured interface with (e.g., be placed over, surround) the system **100** for providing a scanning medium, which receives the volume of tissue extending through an aperture of the patient interface system. The system **100**, as shown in FIG. 2A, can further be in communication with a controller and a computing system configured to process information from the system **100** and render information derived from the system **100** at a display. As shown in FIGS. 2C and 2D, embodiments of the system **100** preferably allow access to a patient's chest wall and axilla, in order to facilitate scanning of a protruding tissue of the patient (e.g., breast tissue). However, the system **100** can additionally or alternatively coordinate with any other suitable element(s) that facilitate scanning of a volume of tissue of a patient. Furthermore, the system **100** is preferably configured to facilitate ultrasound scanning of a volume of tissue of a patient, but variations of the system **100** can additionally or alternatively be configured to facilitate any other suitable modality of tissue scanning making use of a scanning medium in which the volume of tissue is at least partially submerged. In variations, the system **100** can include or otherwise interface with elements of the patient interface system described in U.S. application Ser. No. 14/208,181 entitled “Patient Interface System” and filed on 13 Mar. 2014, some variations of which are described in

further detail below; however, the system **100** can additionally or alternatively interface with any other suitable element(s) that facilitate scanning of a volume of tissue of the patient.

1.1 System—Inner Chamber and Transducer

The inner chamber **110** defines a medium volume for containment of the scanning medium **112** (shown in FIG. 2C), and is preferably mounted to a transducer **120** that scans the volume of tissue along a motion path. The inner chamber **110** functions to provide a volume of scanning medium that surrounds one or more regions of the volume of tissue undergoing scanning, and further to allow actuation of the transducer **120** in relation to the volume of tissue being scanned. The scanning medium is preferably water, such that the inner chamber **110** provides a water bath for acoustic coupling with the volume of tissue in operation; however, the scanning medium can additionally or alternatively comprise any other suitable acoustic coupling medium that facilitates ultrasound scanning. For instance, the scanning medium can comprise a hydrogel material or any other suitable scanning medium. In variations of the system **100** adapted for imaging modalities aside from ultrasound, the scanning medium can comprise any other suitable scanning medium, or alternatively, the system **100** can omit use of a scanning medium (e.g., other than air).

The inner chamber **110** preferably defines a substantially cylindrical volume to contain the scanning medium and to receive the volume of tissue of the patient; however, the inner chamber **110** can alternatively define any other suitable volume morphology for scanning medium containment and/or tissue volume reception. The medium volume defined by the inner chamber **110** is preferably substantially larger (e.g., 5-10× larger) than the volume of tissue intended to be scanned; however, the medium volume can alternatively have any other suitable volumetric capacity. The inner chamber **110** is further preferably composed of a material that is one or more of: able to be sanitized or cleaned (e.g., after each patient interaction, etc.), resistant to damage by the scanning medium being used (e.g., corrosion proof, corrosion resistant), low friction (e.g., to facilitate motion of the inner chamber **110** during actuation), and characterized with sufficient mechanical properties (e.g., stiffness, compliance, thermal expansion coefficient, etc.) to support the weight of the scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**. However, the inner chamber **110** can additionally or alternatively have any other suitable properties. In a specific example, the inner chamber **110** is a cylindrical chamber composed having a low friction and corrosion-proof inner surface that supports the scanning medium during actuation of the inner chamber **110** relative to other elements of the system **100**, and that has a suitable coefficient of thermal expansion to maintain necessary waterproof seals at interfaces between the inner chamber **110** and other elements of the system **100**.

The inner chamber **110** is preferably configured to move along a linear path, as enabled by the actuator **160** described below, in transmitting the transducer **120** along a linear motion path. As such, motion of the inner chamber **110**, with the transducer **120**, in a posterior-anterior direction relative to a volume of tissue of the user, can enable scanning of an entire volume of tissue of a patient in a consistent manner. However, the inner chamber **110** can alternatively be configured to move along any other suitable path(s) in relation to other elements of the system **100**, in facilitating scanning of the patient's tissue. For instance, the inner chamber **110** can be guided along a non-linear path that corresponds to a shape of a volume of tissue being scanned.

The transducer **120** is preferably an ultrasound ring transducer comprising elements configured to emit acoustic signals toward a volume of tissue within the inner chamber **110** and/or elements configured to receive acoustic signals (e.g., scattered acoustic signals, reflected acoustic signals, transmitted acoustic signals, etc.) from the volume of tissue, in order to generate a rendering of the volume of tissue. The elements of the ring transducer **120** can be configured to form an enclosed perimeter about the volume of tissue (e.g., within a scanning plane), and in one specific example, can form a circular perimeter about the volume of tissue. However, the elements of the transducer **120** can alternatively be configured in any other suitable manner. For instance, the elements can form one or more of: a closed boundary (e.g., polygonal boundary, ellipsoidal boundary, etc.), an open boundary (e.g., semi-circular boundary, open curvilinear boundary, open linear boundary, etc.), and a surface about the volume of tissue.

In variations of the transducer **120** comprising an ultrasound ring transducer, the transducer elements can comprise any one or more of: piezoelectric elements, capacitive elements (e.g., capacitive micromachined ultrasonic transducer elements), and any other type of ultrasound element. However, the transducer **120** can be configured with any other suitable elements that enable generation of a rendering of the volume of tissue. The transducer **120** can be an embodiment of a transducer **120** as described in one or more of: U.S. application Ser. No. 13/368,169 entitled "System and Method for Imaging a Volume of Tissue" and filed on 7 Feb. 2012, U.S. application Ser. No. 13/756,851 entitled "System and Method for Imaging a Volume of Tissue" and filed on 1 Feb. 2013, and U.S. application Ser. No. 13/894,202 entitled "System and Method for Performing an Image-Guided Biopsy" and filed on 14 May 2013, which are each incorporated herein in its entirety by this reference, or any other suitable transducer **120**. Furthermore, embodiments of the system **100** can additionally or alternatively enable access to and scanning of any other suitable tissue (e.g., non-breast tissue) of a patient.

The transducer **120**, in cooperation with motion of the inner chamber **110** preferably provides complete access to the volume of tissue being scanned. For instance, the transducer **120** can be configured to provide access to a volume of breast tissue from the nipple region entirely to the chest wall of the patient. In one variation, the ring transducer **120** can be coupled to a superior portion of the inner chamber **110** (e.g., in the orientation shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B), by way of a transducer mount **125**, as shown in FIG. 3A. In this variation, the transducer mount **125** or the inner chamber **110** can circumscribe the other one of the inner chamber **110** and the transducer mount **125**, wherein the transducer mount **125** couples to the transducer **120** while enabling the volume of tissue to access the inner chamber **110**, through the transducer **120**. Furthermore, the transducer mount **125** can include a set of openings **126** that allow scanning medium drainage and/or prevent scanning medium trapping (e.g., between elements of the system) as the inner chamber **110** travels along the motion path. In a specific example, the transducer mount **125** includes a set of openings **126** circumferentially arranged between a superior portion of the inner chamber **110** and the transducer **120**, such that scanning medium weeping can occur from a region inferior to the transducer **120** (in the orientation shown in FIG. 1B). The set of openings **126** can, however, be arranged relative to the transducer **120**, the transducer mount **125**, and the inner chamber **110** in any other suitable manner.

Additionally, in variations wherein the transducer **120** is configured to move along a motion path (e.g., as enabled with the inner chamber), the ring transducer **120** can be electrically coupled to a control module for the system by way of an electromechanical coupler **127** (e.g., cable carrier), as shown in FIG. 3B, configured to enable motion of the ring transducer while providing consistent electrical communication between the transducer **120** and the control module. However, the inner chamber **110**, the transducer **120**, and/or the transducer mount **125** can alternatively be configured in any other suitable manner. Furthermore, in relation to the volume of scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**, the volume of scanning medium can be adjusted as the transducer **120** moves along the motion path by way of a medium inlet **141** and/or a medium outlet **142** (as described in further detail below). For instance, in one variation, the system **100** can be configured to increase a level of the scanning medium within the inner chamber **110** as the transducer **120** moves in a superior direction, and the system **100** can be configured to decrease the level of the scanning medium within the inner chamber **110** as the transducer **120** moves in an inferior direction. As such, this variation, motion of the transducer **120** can be coordinated with the level of scanning medium within the inner chamber, in providing scanning medium that surrounds the volume of tissue in operation. Additionally or alternatively, the system **100** can be configured to maintain a substantially constant volume of the scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**.

1.2 System—Outer Chamber

The outer chamber **130** is configured to surround at least a portion of the inner chamber **120**, and functions to guide the inner chamber along the motion path, in facilitating scanning of the volume of tissue. Preferably, the outer chamber **130** is concentrically aligned about the inner chamber **110**; however, the outer chamber **130** and the inner chamber **110** can have any other suitable alternative relationship in relation to surrounding of the inner chamber **110**. Similar to the inner chamber **110**, the outer chamber **130** preferably defines a substantially cylindrical volume that surrounds the inner chamber **110**; however, the outer chamber **130** can alternatively define any other suitable volume morphology that allows the inner chamber **110** to be guided along the motion path. The outer chamber **130** is preferably a substantially stationary element of the system, and as such, is preferably not coupled to the actuator **160** described below; however, the outer chamber **130** can alternatively be configured to move along any suitable path(s) in relation to other elements of the system **100**, in facilitating scanning of the patient's tissue.

The outer chamber **130** preferably defines a region **131**, as shown in FIG. 4A, that is at least partially isolated from the scanning medium. In variations, the region **131** can be defined between the inner chamber **110** and the outer chamber **130**, and in one variation, the interior wall (e.g., cylindrical wall) of the outer chamber **130** can be displaced from the exterior wall (e.g., cylindrical wall) of the inner chamber **110** (e.g., by a constant offset) to define the region **131**. As such, in the example shown in FIG. 4A, an annular prismatic (e.g., circular annular prismatic) region **131** between the outer chamber **130** and the inner chamber **110** can be isolated from scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**, thus providing a “dry” space for electrical coupling elements (e.g., an electromechanical coupler **127** and/or any other elements of the system suited for a dry environment. In one variation, as shown in FIG. 4A, electrical circuitry and electrical coupling elements of the transducer ring **120**

can be configured to pass into an annular prismatic “dry” region defined by the outer chamber **130**, thus isolating them from the scanning medium. To further promote dryness in the region **131** defined between the outer chamber **130** and the inner chamber **110**, the outer chamber **130** can be coupled to or otherwise in communication with any suitable heating elements to heat the region **131** and evaporate any moisture within the region **131**. Additionally or alternatively, the region **131** can include a desiccant material (e.g., silica gel) that absorbs moisture in the event that moisture from the scanning medium enters the region **131**.

In variations wherein the outer chamber **130** defines a region **131** isolated from the scanning medium, at least one of the inner chamber **110**, the transducer piston **125** coupled to the transducer ring **120**, and the outer chamber **130** can include a seal **134**, as shown in FIG. 1B, configured circumferentially about a surface of one or more of: the inner chamber **110**, the transducer mount **125**, and the outer chamber **130** to provide a hermetic seal that prevents fluid leakage into the region **131**.

In one variation, as shown in FIG. 4A, the transducer mount **125** can include a circumferential groove **128a** at an outer surface configured to receive an X-ring seal **134a** that does not roll during motion of the inner chamber **110**, while providing a hermetic seal between the outer chamber **130** and the transducer mount **125**. As such, the seal **134a** in this configuration is indirectly coupled to the inner chamber **110** and in contact with the outer chamber **130**, to isolate the region **131** defined between the outer chamber **130** and the inner chamber **110** from the scanning medium as the inner chamber moves along the motion path. However, in alternatives of this variation, the seal **134** can be directly coupled between the inner chamber **110** and the outer chamber **130** in isolating the region **131** from scanning medium.

In another variation, as shown in FIG. 4B, the inner chamber **110** can include a circumferential groove **128b** at an outer surface configured to receive an O-ring or X-ring seal **134b** that provides a hermetic seal during motion of the inner chamber **110** along the motion path. Additionally or alternatively, in yet another variation, as shown in FIG. 4C, the outer chamber **130** can include a circumferential groove **128c** about an inner surface configured to receive an O-ring or X-ring seal **134c** that provides a hermetic seal during motion of the inner chamber **110** (while the outer chamber **130** and its O-ring/X-ring are substantially stationary). The system **100** can, however, include any other suitable variation of the seal **134** in isolating the region **131** defined between the outer chamber **130** and the inner chamber **110** from the scanning medium. As such, the seal **134** can be configured to move with the inner chamber **110** along the motion path, or can be configured to be stationary during motion of the inner chamber **110** (e.g., relative to the piston module **140** and the outer chamber **130**), one example of which is shown in FIG. 4D.

Additionally or alternatively, the system **100** can include any other suitable sealing elements (e.g., sealing compounds, rolling diaphragms, etc.) configured to provide a hermetic seal to define a volume isolated from scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**. Furthermore, surfaces of the outer chamber **130**, transducer mount **125**, inner chamber **110**, and/or any other element of the system **100** involved in forming the isolated “dry” region **131** are preferably processed to reduce surface roughness, thereby reducing sliding friction produced between elements. In a specific example, such surfaces can be nickel-plated with Teflon impregnation; however, variations of the specific example can include any other suitable surface treatments or

use of materials (e.g., stainless steel, plastic) that reduces sliding friction. Furthermore, the outer chamber 110, transducer mount 125, and/or the inner chamber 110 can alternatively be configured in any other suitable manner.

1.3 System—Piston Module and Detection Subsystem

As shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B, the piston module 140 defines a base surface within the inner chamber 110, and can comprise a medium inlet 141 and a medium outlet 142 that enable inflow and outflow of the scanning medium into and from the inner chamber 110. In some variations, the piston module 140 can additionally or alternatively be coupled to a detection subsystem 150.

The piston module 140 functions to facilitate regulation of an amount of scanning medium within the inner chamber 110, and can additionally or alternatively function to facilitate sensing/indication of environmental parameters related to the system no. The piston module 140 is preferably a stationary element of the system 100, such that the inner chamber 110 moves about a stationary piston module iv; however, the piston module 140 can alternatively be configured to move along any suitable path. For instance, the piston module 140 can move, with the inner chamber 110, in modulating a level of the scanning medium within the inner chamber 110. Furthermore, the piston module 140 preferably defines an inferior base surface within the inner chamber 110, but can additionally or alternatively define any other suitable surface in relation to the inner chamber 110.

An interface 40 between the piston module 140 and the inner chamber 110 is preferably hermetically sealed to facilitate containment of the scanning medium within the inner chamber 110. In particular, the interface between the piston module and the inner chamber is preferably hermetically sealed as the inner chamber moves along the motion path, such that the scanning medium does not leak from the inner chamber as the inner chamber 110 moves along the motion path. As such, the piston module 140 and/or the inner chamber 110 can include elements that facilitate generation of a hermetic seal at a junction between the inner chamber 110 and the piston module 140. In a first variation, the piston module 140 comprises a circumferential groove 147a at an exterior portion of the piston module 140 configured to receive an X-ring or an O-ring seal 143a that provides a hermetic seal to contain the scanning medium during motion of the inner chamber 110. However, the piston module 140 and/or the inner chamber 110 can be configured to provide a hermetic seal with any other alternative or additional elements (e.g., sealing compounds, rolling diaphragms, etc.). Surfaces of the piston module 140 and/or the inner chamber 110 are preferably processed to reduce surface roughness, thereby reducing sliding friction produced between elements. In a specific example, similar to that described above in relation to relative motion of the inner chamber 100 and the outer chamber 130, such surfaces can be nickel-plated with Teflon impregnation; however, variations of the specific example can include any other suitable surface treatments or use of materials (e.g., stainless steel, plastic) that reduces sliding friction. Furthermore, the piston module 140 and/or the inner chamber 110 can alternatively be configured in any other suitable manner.

The medium inlet 141 is preferably an opening into the inner chamber 110 through the piston module 140, and functions to enable inflow of the scanning medium into the inner chamber 110. As such, in the orientation shown in FIGS. 4A and 5, the medium inlet 141 allows the inner chamber 110 to be filled from an inferior (e.g., bottom) portion of the inner chamber 110. However, medium inlet 141 can additionally or alternatively be configured to deliver

scanning medium into any other suitable portion of the inner chamber (e.g., through a vertical wall of the inner chamber, etc.). In variations wherein the medium inlet 141 is an opening of the piston module 140, the medium inlet 141 can be defined through the thickness of the piston module 140, or can alternatively define an opening into the inner chamber 110 in any other suitable manner. Preferably, the medium inlet 141 is positioned at a peripheral region of the piston module 140, as shown in FIGS. 4A and 5. However, the medium inlet 141 can alternatively be positioned at any other suitable non-peripheral region of the piston module 140.

As shown in FIG. 5, the medium inlet 141 is preferably a valved opening, and preferably comprises a check valve 144 configured to prevent backflow (e.g., of contaminated scanning medium) of contents of the inner chamber 110 from the inner chamber 110 in a reverse direction. However, the medium inlet 141 can alternatively omit a valve or can prevent backflow in any other suitable manner. In some variations, as shown in FIG. 6, the medium inlet 141 can be configured to transmit the scanning medium through a fitting 145 that directs the scanning medium laterally into the inner chamber 110, thereby preventing a vertical stream of scanning fluid into the inner chamber that can disturb the scanning process, wherein the fitting 145 also functions to trap air bubbles that may be generated during scanning of the volume of tissue of the patient. However, the medium inlet 141 can be configured to transmit the scanning medium through any other fitting that directs fluid flow in any other suitable manner, or can be configured to transmit the scanning medium without a fitting.

Similar to the medium inlet 141, the medium outlet 142 is preferably an opening from the inner chamber 110 through the piston module 140, and functions to enable outflow of the scanning medium from the inner chamber 110. As such, in the orientation shown in FIGS. 4A and 5, the medium outlet 142 allows the inner chamber 110 to be drained from an inferior (e.g., bottom) portion of the inner chamber 110. However, medium outlet 142 can additionally or alternatively be configured to allow outflow of scanning medium from any other suitable portion of the inner chamber (e.g., through a vertical wall of the inner chamber, etc.). In variations wherein the medium outlet 142 is an opening through the piston module 140, the medium outlet 142 can be defined through the thickness of the piston module 140, or can alternatively define an opening from the inner chamber 110 in any other suitable manner. Preferably, the medium outlet 142 is positioned at a peripheral region of the piston module 140, as shown in FIGS. 4A and 5. However, the medium outlet 142 can alternatively be positioned at any other suitable non-peripheral region of the piston module 140. Furthermore, as shown in FIG. 5, the medium outlet 142 can be in communication with a check valve 144b that prevents potentially contaminated scanning medium from backflowing into the system 100.

In some variations, a surface of the piston module 140 facing the interior of the inner chamber 110 can be configured to direct fluid flow toward the medium outlet 142, for instance, by providing a graded surface. The medium outlet 142 is preferably an opening with filtering capacity, and preferably comprises a strainer washer 146 configured to prevent undesired material within the inner chamber 110 from passing through the medium outlet 142, as shown in FIG. 6. As such, the strainer washer 146 prevents clogging of elements downstream of the medium outlet 142. However, the medium outlet 142 can alternatively omit a straining or filtering element. In some variations, the medium

outlet **142** can be configured to cooperate with a fitting that prevents undesired fluid flow from the inner chamber, which can interfere with scanning of the volume of tissue. In one such variation, as shown in FIG. 6, the fitting can comprise an anti-vortex drain fitting **147** having a slotted opening that prevents fluid eddies from forming and prevents the fitting from drawing in air. As such, the anti-vortex drain fitting **147** can accelerate fluid drainage from the inner chamber **110** and trap air bubbles that may be generated during scanning of the volume of tissue of the patient. However, the medium outlet **142** can be configured to transmit the scanning medium from the inner chamber **110** through any other fitting that directs fluid flow in any other suitable manner, or can be configured to transmit the scanning medium without a fitting.

The piston module **140** can define multiple medium inlets and/or multiple medium outlets in regulating an amount of scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**. Additionally or alternatively, one or more openings into the chamber can be configured to function as both a medium inlet **141** and a medium outlet **142** in a bi-functional manner. Furthermore, the medium inlet(s) **141** and/or the medium outlet(s) **142** can be routed through structural elements of the system (e.g., hollow support legs **148** coupled to an inferior surface of the piston module **140**), for compactness of the system **100**. In a specific example, as shown in FIG. 4A, the piston module **140** comprises two medium inlets **141** and a single medium outlet **142**, wherein the medium inlets **141** and the medium outlet **142** are routed through three hollow support legs **148**, respectively coupled the piston module **140**, wherein a fourth support leg provides routing of electrical components (e.g., wiring) to support the detection subsystem **150** of the piston module **140**.

Furthermore, in relation to the amount of scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**, the medium inlet(s) **141** and/or the medium outlet(s) **142** can be configured to cooperate with a manifold **149** fluidly coupled to the medium inlet(s) **141** and the medium outlet(s) **142** and in communication with a fluid handling system that transmits scanning medium into the medium inlet(s) **141** and out from the medium outlet(s) **142**, as shown in FIG. 3A. In a specific example, the manifold **149** can be welded to fluid conduits into the medium inlet(s) **141** and to fluid conduits into the medium outlet(s) **142** of the piston module **140**, as shown in FIGS. 1B and 4A. Furthermore, in the specific example, fluid delivery into the manifold **149** can involve the use of valves (e.g., drain check valves) to prevent backflow of fluid into any portion of the system **100** in an undesired manner, as shown in FIG. 5.

As indicated above, an amount of scanning medium within the inner chamber **110** can be configured to decrease as the inner chamber **110** and coupled ring transducer **120** move in a superior-to-inferior direction (e.g., in relation to the ground), such that scanning medium is only provided up to the region of the volume of tissue currently being scanned. In one such specific example, an amount of scanning medium within the inner chamber **110** can be configured to decrease at a rate of 1 gallon per inch of travel along a motion path of 6.5 inches in the superior-to-inferior direction in relation to the ground, as the transducer **120** moves in the superior-to-inferior direction. However, the amount of scanning medium can be maintained within the inner chamber no during scanning of the volume of tissue. In one such variation, the scanning medium can be pumped into and drained from the inner chamber **110** as the inner chamber **110** moves in a superior-to-inferior direction and an inferior-to-superior direction, respectively. In another such

variation, a surface (e.g., base surface) within the inner chamber **110** can be configured to move in opposition to motion of the inner chamber **110**, thereby maintaining a level of the scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**. In yet another variation, the inner chamber **110** can contain a bladder of scanning medium that is filled with scanning medium as the inner chamber **110** moves in a superior-to-inferior direction. Yet alternatively, an amount of scanning medium within the inner chamber **110** can be configured to provide any suitable level of medium in relation to the volume of tissue being scanned, as the inner chamber **110** and coupled transducer **120** move in a superior-to-inferior direction, an inferior-to-superior direction, or along any other suitable motion path.

As shown in FIGS. 1B and 6, the detection subsystem **150** is in communication with the interior of the inner chamber **110** and coupled to the piston module **140**, and functions to enable environmental sensing within the inner chamber **110**. Preferably, the detection subsystem **150** enables one or more of optical sensing of events within the inner chamber **110** and temperature sensing within the inner chamber **110**. As such, the detection subsystem **150** can include an optical sensor **151** (e.g., of a camera) and/or a temperature sensor **152** configured to face the interior of the inner chamber **110**. In one such variation, the detection subsystem **150** comprises an optical sensor **151** fluidly isolated from scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**, but able to detect events within the inner chamber **110** by way of a transparent covering **153** that provides fluid isolation but light transmission. As such, the optical sensor **151** of this variation is configured to enable a volume of tissue within the inner chamber **110** to be observed (e.g., in relation to positioning of the volume of tissue within the inner chamber, etc.) during operation of the system **100**. The optical sensor **151** can be configured to provide video footage and/or still images of the interior of the inner chamber **110** (e.g., during operation, etc.); however, the optical sensor **151** can alternatively be configured to provide any other suitable type of image data of the interior of the inner chamber **110**.

The detection subsystem **150** can additionally or alternatively comprise indicators configured to indicate proper function of any element of the detection subsystem **150** and/or other elements of the system **100**. In one such variation, as shown in FIG. 6, the detection system can include a set of light emitters **154** (e.g., LEDs) fluidly isolated from scanning medium within the inner chamber **110**, but able to detect events within the inner chamber **110** by way of a transparent covering **153** that provides fluid isolation but light transmission. As such, the set of light emitters **154** can be configured proximal the optical sensor **151** for transmission of light through the transparent covering **153**. In this variation, the set of light emitters **154** can function as indicators (e.g., of proper function of the system **100**, of improper function of the system **100**), or can additionally or alternatively function to provide illumination that facilitates optical sensing by the optical sensor **151** of the detection subsystem **150**.

As noted above, the detection subsystem **150** can additionally or alternatively include a temperature sensor **152** that is in thermal communication with the interior of the inner chamber **110**, thereby enabling detection of thermal conditions within the inner chamber **110** and/or temperature regulation of contents (e.g., scanning medium) of the inner chamber **110**. In variations of the detection subsystem **150** comprising a temperature sensor **152**, the temperature sensor is preferably configured proximal at least one of the medium inlet **141** and the medium outlet **142**, thereby enabling

detection of a temperature of the scanning medium as it enters/leaves the inner chamber 110. However, the temperature sensor can alternatively be configured away from the medium inlet 141 and/or the medium outlet 142, thereby enabling detection of an ambient temperature within the inner chamber 110. As such, the detection subsystem 150 can comprise multiple temperature sensors 152 configured to provide holistic information regarding temperature within regions of the inner chamber 110.

In a specific example, as shown in FIG. 6, the detection subsystem 150 comprises an optical sensor 151 centrally located within a recess 156 of a superior surface of the piston module 140, wherein the recess is covered by a transparent covering 153 (e.g., glass covering, plastic covering) that hermetically seals the optical sensor from scanning medium within the inner chamber 110 by way of a set of face-sealing O-rings. In the specific example, the detection module 150 comprises an array of light emitting diodes 154 (LEDs) surrounding the optical sensor and configured to indicate proper/improper function of the sensors of the detection subsystem 150, wherein the set of LEDs is also located proximal the optical sensor 151 within the recess. Furthermore, the detection subsystem 150 of the specific example comprises a temperature sensor 152 partially embedded at a superior surface of the piston module 140, proximal the medium outlet 142, thereby enabling detection of a temperature of the scanning medium within the inner chamber 110. Furthermore, the optical sensor 151 is configured to transmit an image dataset of the volume of tissue, during scanning, to a computing system, and the temperature sensor 152 is configured to transmit a temperature dataset associated with the scanning medium to the computing system. Thus, the computing system of the example can process the image dataset and the temperature dataset and generate an analysis, and provide information derived from the analysis to an entity associated with the patient. Other variations and examples of the detection subsystem 150 can, however, be configured in any other suitable manner relative to the piston module 140.

Furthermore, the detection subsystem 150 can include any other suitable sensor modules configured to detect parameters of the scanning medium and/or environmental conditions within the inner chamber 110. Additionally or alternatively, the detection subsystem 150, the inner chamber 110, and/or any other suitable elements of the system 100 in communication with the inner chamber 110 can facilitate retention of the volume of tissue in position during scanning.

1.4 System—Actuator and Patient Interface

The actuator 160 comprises a stationary portion 161 mounted to the piston module 140, and a moving portion 162 coupled to the inner chamber 110 and configured to produce motion of the inner chamber along the motion path. The actuator 160 functions to enable positioning of the inner chamber 110, with the scanning medium and the transducer 120, relative to the volume of tissue being scanned in a controllable manner. The moving portion 162 of the actuator 160 is preferably a linear actuator that produces vertical motion of the inner chamber 110 and coupled transducer 120 along a vertical axis, such that the inner chamber 110 can move in a superior-to-inferior direction and an inferior-to-superior direction (e.g., in relation to the ground) along the vertical axis. However, the actuator 160 can be configured to produce motion along any other suitable motion path (e.g., a non-linear motion path, a motion path in multiple coordinate directions). Furthermore, the moving portion 162 can be coupled to plates that couple the moving portion 162 to electronic components of the system (e.g., electromechanical

coupler 127, wires, etc.). In a first variation, the actuator 160 comprises a motor and lead screw mechanism, as the moving portion 162 coupled to the inner chamber 110, that provides motion of the inner chamber 110 and coupled transducer 120 along a vertical axis. In another variation, the moving portion 162 of the actuator 160 is configured to produce motion hydraulically. In yet another variation, the actuator 160 can comprise a scissor lift, as the moving portion 162, that produces linear motion. However, other variations of the actuator 160 can be configured to produce motion by any other suitable mechanism.

Travel along the motion path can be controlled using any one or more of limit switches, position encoders, and any other suitable element that tracks motion. For instance, the actuator 160 can be configured to cooperate with one or more limit switches that govern endpoints of the motion path, wherein the endpoints can be adjustable. Additionally or alternatively, the actuator 160 can be configured to cooperate with a position encoder (e.g., linear encoder, rotary encoder, Hall-effect sensor, etc.) configured to enable identification of a position of travel along the motion path. The actuator 160 can, however, be configured to cooperate with any other suitable element in order to produce motion along the motion path in a controllable manner. Furthermore, in some variations, a base 166 of the actuator 160 can be coupled to an adjustable mount that allows the actuator 160 to be positioned in a plane (e.g., an X-Y plane) and/or allows adjustment of pitch/yaw of the actuator 160.

As shown in FIG. 1B, the stationary portion 161 of the actuator 160 is preferably mounted to the piston module 140, such that the piston module 140 is substantially fixed in space. As such, the stationary portion 161 of actuator 160 preferably couples the piston module 140 to a support structure of the system 100, and in variations of the system 100 including a manifold 149, the stationary portion 161 can couple the piston module 140 to the manifold 149. However, the stationary portion 161 can additionally or alternatively couple the piston module 140 to any other suitable portion of the system 100 that is substantially non-moving. Furthermore, the moving portion 162 of the actuator 160 is preferably mounted to the inner chamber (e.g., using a coupling plate), such that the inner chamber 110 and coupled transducer 120 can move along the motion path enabled by the actuator 160. As such, the piston module 140 preferably does not move as the inner chamber 110 moves along the motion path, while hermetic seals are maintained using elements as described above. However, variations of the actuator 160 can alternatively produce motion of any or both of the inner chamber 110 and the piston module 140.

In some variations, the actuator 160 can be coupled to the inner chamber 110 and/or other moving elements of the system 100 with one or more isolation mounts 165 that allow motion in at least one direction or plane, while constraining other forms of motion. For instance, in one variation, as shown in FIG. 4A, the inner chamber 110 can be coupled to peripherally located isolation mounts 165 which are coupled to the moving portion of the actuator 160 (e.g., using a plate coupler), wherein the isolation mounts 165 allow the inner chamber 110 to “float” laterally with some freedom while constraining motion of the inner chamber 110 along a vertical axis (in the orientation shown in FIG. 4A). In this variation, such a configuration prevents the piston module 140 from being over constrained and/or binding during motion of the inner chamber 110. Other variations of the system 100 can include isolation mounts 165 coupled to any other suitable element of the system (e.g., the outer chamber

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130, as shown in FIG. 3B) in order to allow freedom of motion in one or more directions, while constraining motion of others.

As shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B, the system 100 can further comprise a patient support surface 170 coupled to the outer chamber 130 and having an opening 172 (as shown in FIG. 3B) that facilitates reception of the volume of tissue into the inner chamber 110. The patient support surface 170 is preferably configured to interface with a patient interface system that receives a prone patient in a configuration that allows protruding tissue of the patient to enter the opening of the patient support surface 170 for scanning. As such, in some embodiments, the system 100 can interface with the patient interface system described in U.S. application Ser. No. 14/208,181, entitled "Patient Interface System" and filed on 13 Mar. 2014, which is incorporated herein in its entirety by this reference; however, the system 100 can additionally or alternatively be configured to interface with any other suitable system to facilitate scanning of a volume of tissue protruding from a patient's body. In some variations, wherein the patient support surface 170 is configured to interface with a variation of the patient interface system described in U.S. application Ser. No. 14/208,181, the patient support surface 170 can comprise a frustoconical surface with a centrally located opening 172 that aligns with the patient interface system and facilitates reception of the volume of tissue. In a specific example, the patient support surface 170 can be welded to the outer chamber 130 with face-sealing rings (e.g., O-rings) to provide a hermetic seal against scanning medium that leaves the inner chamber and enters a region defined by the patient support surface; however, the patient support surface 170 can alternatively be coupled to any other element(s) of the system 100 in any other suitable manner.

Embodiments of the system 100 can include any other suitable elements that facilitate provision of scanning medium and a transducer 120 to enable scanning of a volume of tissue of a patient in a controlled manner. For instance, system 100 can include one or more level sensors that facilitate identification of one or more amounts of scanning medium within the system 100. In one example, as shown in FIG. 3A, the system 100 can include a first level sensor 176 in communication with an inlet into the inner chamber 110, and a second level sensor 177 coupled to a patient support surface 170, such that the first level sensor 176 enables identification of an empty state and the second level sensor 177 enables identification of a full state in relation to scanning medium within the inner chamber. The level sensors can, however, be coupled to or otherwise able to detect a level of the scanning medium in any other suitable manner.

In some variations, an example of which is shown in FIG. 3A, the system 100 can additionally or alternatively include a chamber 178, coupled about one or more of the inner chamber 110, the outer chamber 130, and the patient support surface 170, that functions as a reservoir for splash overflow protection, in the event that scanning medium enters a region of the system 100 in an undesirable manner. As such, in the example, the chamber 178 can capture any portion of the scanning medium that spills over the patient support surface 170, thereby preventing scanning medium from adversely affecting other components of the system 100. The system 100 can, however, include any other suitable element(s).

Embodiments of the system 100 and variations thereof can be embodied and/or implemented at least in part by a machine configured to receive a computer-readable medium storing computer-readable instructions. The instructions are

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preferably executed by computer-executable components preferably integrated with the system 100 and one or more portions of a processor and/or a controller. The computer-readable medium can be stored on any suitable computer-readable media such as RAMs, ROMs, flash memory, EEPROMs, optical devices (CD or DVD), hard drives, floppy drives, or any suitable device. The computer-executable component is preferably a general or application specific processor, but any suitable dedicated hardware or hardware/firmware combination device can alternatively or additionally execute the instructions.

The FIGURES illustrate the architecture, functionality and operation of possible implementations of systems, methods and computer program products according to preferred embodiments, example configurations, and variations thereof. In this regard, each block in a flowchart or block diagram may represent a module, segment, or portion of code, which comprises one or more executable instructions for implementing the specified logical function(s). It should also be noted that, in some alternative implementations, the functions noted in the block can occur out of the order noted in the FIGURES. For example, two blocks shown in succession may, in fact, be executed substantially concurrently, or the blocks may sometimes be executed in the reverse order, depending upon the functionality involved. It will also be noted that each block of the block diagrams and/or flowchart illustration, and combinations of blocks in the block diagrams and/or flowchart illustration, can be implemented by special purpose hardware-based systems that perform the specified functions or acts, or combinations of special purpose hardware and computer instructions.

As a person skilled in the art will recognize from the previous detailed description and from the figures and claims, modifications and changes can be made to the preferred embodiments of the invention without departing from the scope of this invention defined in the following claims.

We claim:

1. A system for providing a scanning medium for scanning a volume of tissue of a patient, the system comprising:
 - an inner chamber configured to contain the scanning medium;
 - a transducer that moves along a motion path, with the inner chamber, in scanning the volume of tissue, the transducer including an array of ultrasound elements that scan the volume of tissue in operation;
 - an outer chamber concentrically aligned about the inner chamber to guide the inner chamber along the motion path,
 - a seal coupled to the inner chamber and in contact with the outer chamber, wherein the seal isolates a region defined between the outer chamber and the inner chamber from the scanning medium as the inner chamber moves along the motion path;
 - a piston module having a base surface within the inner chamber, the piston module including a medium inlet and a medium outlet for adjusting an amount of the scanning medium within the inner chamber; and
 - an actuator module comprising 1) a stationary portion mounted to the piston module, and 2) a moving portion coupled to the inner chamber and configured to produce motion of the inner chamber along the motion path.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein a superior region of the outer chamber is mounted to a frustoconical patient interface surface including an aperture configured to receive the volume of tissue during operation, and wherein the frusto-

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conical patient interface surface is coupled to a chamber that receives an overflow volume of the scanning medium.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the seal is coupled within a circumferential groove of a transducer mount that couples the inner chamber to the transducer, wherein the seal is configured to move, with the inner chamber, along the motion path relative to the outer chamber.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein the transducer mount includes a set of openings circumferentially arranged between a superior portion of the inner chamber and the transducer, the set of openings configured to allow the scanning medium to weep from a region inferior to the transducer.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the transducer is mounted to a superior portion of the inner chamber, and wherein the inner chamber and the ring transducer are configured to move along a posterior-to-anterior axis of the volume of tissue in a first operation mode.

6. The system of claim 1, further comprising a controller that coordinates inflow and outflow of the scanning medium within the inner chamber, with motion of the inner chamber along the motion path, by way of the medium inlet and the medium outlet.

7. The system of claim 1, further comprising a detection subsystem coupled to the base surface of the piston module and comprising 1) an optical sensor module fluidly isolated from the scanning medium within the inner chamber and 2) a temperature sensor proximal at least one of the medium inlet and the medium outlet.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the optical sensor module is configured to transmit an image dataset of the

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volume of tissue, during scanning, to a computing system, wherein the temperature sensor is configured to transmit a temperature dataset associated with the scanning medium to the computing system, and wherein the computing system is configured to provide an analysis derived from the image dataset and the temperature dataset to an entity associated with the patient.

9. The system of claim 8, further comprising an array of light emitters surrounding the optical sensor module and configured to indicate proper function of the system, wherein the optical sensor module and the array of light emitters are isolated from the scanning medium within the inner chamber by way of a transparent covering mounted to the piston module.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the medium inlet comprises a fitting that directs the scanning medium laterally into the inner chamber, and wherein the medium outlet is in communication with an anti-vortex fitting that prevents generation of a fluid eddy as the scanning medium is drained from the inner chamber.

11. The system of claim 1, wherein an interface between the piston module and the inner chamber is hermetically sealed as the inner chamber moves along the motion path, and wherein the piston module is substantially stationary as the inner chamber moves along the motion path in operation.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the region defined between the outer chamber and the inner chamber and hermetically sealed by the seal is an annular prismatic region that houses electrical coupling elements in communication with the transducer.

* * * * *

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当前申请(专利权)人(译)	海豚MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES , INC.		
[标]发明人	TESIC MIKE ORLOFF MARC OBRIGKEIT KEVIN KUNZ DAVID JANER ROMAN		
发明人	TESIC, MIKE ORLOFF, MARC OBRIGKEIT, KEVIN KUNZ, DAVID JANER, ROMAN		
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摘要(译)

一种用于提供扫描一定体积组织的扫描介质的系统，包括：包含扫描介质的内腔；换能器安装在内腔上，并配置成沿着运动路径移动，与内腔一起扫描组织体积；外腔室围绕内腔同心对齐，以沿着运动路径引导内腔室；活塞模块，其限定内腔室内的基面，活塞模块包括介质入口和介质出口，用于调节内腔室内的扫描介质的量；检测子系统，连接到活塞模块的底面；以及致动器，包括安装到活塞模块的固定部分和连接到内腔的移动部分，该移动部分构造成沿着运动路径产生内腔的运动。

